

OXFORD OBSERVER

Vol. IV.

NORWAY, (Mce,) THURSDAY, JUNE 19, 1828.

No. 207.

COMMUNICATION.

NO. XV.

FOR THE OBSERVER.

REFLECTIONS ON THE NATURE OF WAR.

Robert K. Porter in his narrative of the Russian campaign, speaking of the battle of Borodino, says:

"The night passed slowly over the heads of the impatient combatants.—The morning of the 7th of September at length broke, and thousands beheld the dawn for the last time.

The moment was arrived when the dreadful discharge of two thousand cannon was to break the silence of expectation, and arouse at once all the horrors of war." Thus closed that memorable day, and with it terminated the lives of Eighty Thousand human beings. The horses which lay on the ground from right to left, numbered full 25,000. In the space of a square league almost every spot was covered with the killed and wounded.

Alas! the infatuation with which the love of war inspires the human heart. 80,000 human beings awoke for the last time! What must have been their reflections during the preceding night, about themselves, their friends and "sacred home," that they should so dishonourably sacrifice all the endearments of home and friends and domestic peace, to follow a wild desperado to share with him the booty and the spoils of an innocent people, and finally to leave their carcasses to fatten the soil of their enemy. Let us reflect a moment on the outrages, the violence, the cruelties, and the sufferings committed at Moscow by a licentious soldiery; the waste of property, and the destruction of that opulent city. Labaume, speaking of the entry of the French army into that city, says: "The most heart-rending scene which my imagination had ever conceived, far surpassing the most affecting accounts in ancient or modern history, now presented itself before our eyes. A great part of the population of Moscow, frightened, at our arrival, had concealed themselves in cellars, or secret recesses of their houses. As the fire spread around, we saw them rushing in despair from their various asylums. They uttered no imprecations, they breathed no complaint, but carrying with them their most precious effects, fled before the flames. Others of greater sensibility, and actuated by the genuine feelings of nature, saved only their children, who were closely clasped in their arms. Many old people borne down with grief rather than by age, had not sufficient strength to follow their families, and expired near the houses where they were born."

How, says the same writer, "shall I describe the confusion and tumult when permission was granted to pillage this immense city! Soldiers, sutlers, galley slaves, and prostitutes, eagerly ran through the streets, penetrating into the deserted palaces, and carrying away every thing which could gratify avarice. This horrible pillage was not confined to the deserted houses alone, but extended to those which were inhabited; and soon the earthen and the wretchedness of the plunderers, caused devastations which almost equalled those occasioned by the conflagration. Every asylum was soon violated by the licentious troops."

"Nothing," continues he, "could equal the anguish which absorbed every feeling heart, and which increased in the dead of night by the cries of the miserable victims, who were savagely murdered, or by the screams of young females, who fled for protection to their weeping mothers, and whose ineffectual struggles tended only to inflame the passions of their violators."

Now let us ask ourselves for what purpose were all these sacrifices made? For the sake of life, property, and happiness? Why, were thousands and tens of thousands innocent people made to suffer and we, military glory, that phantom, that dazzles and intoxicates the vain and ambitious, and lures them on to deeds of blood and devastation. The love of fame, and the love of gold, two of the most potent engines of Satan, to destroy and mortals away from the paths of rectitude and Christian obedience, into the "broad way" that leads to temporal and eternal ruin.

When souls take fire of high pretensions of holiness, with the voice of poor applause, the mighty shout, the thunder, by the living God, how soon into time must echo, worlds unborn tremble!"

Wm. Penn, by his godly, peaceable life, both by precept and example, has done more essential service to mankind, than all the great war-characters that ever existed, reckoning clear back from

warrior Cain down to warrior Bonaparte, and warrior Tecumseh.

While the character of Wm. Penn seems destined to grow brighter and brighter, as justice and mercy extend, and as the mild peaceable doctrines of Religion are diffused and embraced by men; the war-characters are becoming more and more exposed to the justest censures and detestation of mankind.

Those, that are unacquainted with its ravages, can scarcely conceive, what desolations war must necessarily produce in any country. Two armies of hostile soldiers will, in a short time, strip the land, wherever they march, of all, that are beautiful, lovely, and useful.—Before them a beautiful paradise; behind them a wilderness of desolation and famine. The honest farmer's rich fields of corn, and grain, and grass, are exposed to the incursions and excursions of horses, footmen, artillery, and baggage-teams, and are soon bereft of all their productions, trodden down, torn up in heaps and rows, and completely divested of every stock and spear and leaf of its products, and all its fences and landmarks thrown about topsy-turvy, and thus, the disappointed farmer, and his dependent family are reduced to want and beggary, and perhaps are destitute of a roof to shelter them from the inclemency of the season; for, it often happens, that houses are pillaged of all their valuable furniture and provisions, and are consumed to ashes. Men may talk very bravely, and fight many glorious battles by their firesides, and in grog-shops; but this is quite a different kind of fighting from that which they must experience in actual service. Men, that are the bravest, and most for fighting when they are at home, are not always the foremost in battle when occasion calls for them. If men would only think more, and talk less, on this lamentable subject, I really believe, there would not be so many lovers of war and fighting, as there now are. Kind reader, whoever thou art, if thou hast not seriously reflected upon the wretched effects of war, if thou hast a heart that feels for others' woes, if thou wishest for the welfare, and happiness of thy brethren, I pray thee, bestow some of your serious thoughts and reflections upon this solemn subject; reflect upon its nature, its evils, and moral corruptions; and I am satisfied, that after mature and serious consideration, thou wilt be convinced, that it is a practice, as unlawful and unjustifiable, as the Slave-Trade or piracy, and, in its effects, one of the greatest calamities that has, and now afflicts the human family. It will seem also to be a practice altogether unnecessary; for after several years of bloody war between two nations, it does not settle the subject of dispute; but resort must be had to the same means and measures for settlement, as if they had not fought at all, that is, to amicable negotiation.

"Shall the sword devour forever." SALUS.

MISCELLANY.

THE CAVERN.

In Missouri, the term "Barrens" is applied to a species of highland, covered in a state of nature, with tall, rank grass, and sparingly timbered with the various kinds of oak.

The most striking feature in this description of country is the "sink holes," or natural wells. Their shape is that of a hollow inverted cone, with a diameter nearly equal to its depth, which varies from thirty to fifty feet. At the bottom of many, a clear cold spring discovers itself, and then glides again into the earth.

Concerning their origin, conjecture has been exhausted. Some, with little plausibility, have pronounced them the wells of a race that existed and perished in the remote ages of antiquity; others have ascribed their formation to earthquakes; whilst others, again, believe them to communicate with immense caverns under ground, and that the rains, in seeking these vaults, have borne the incumbent soil along with them.

Of the latter opinion, was a gentleman who had acquired in our little circle, the name of Geologist. To find a cavern communicating with the sink-holes, was all that was wanting to remove our scepticism, and establish his theory on a solid basis. The theory on which he had labored so much, and on which all his conversations was sure to terminate, was soon put to the test.

Three miles below St. Louis, on the west bank of the Mississippi, is a cave, whose entrance is about ten feet above low water mark. With all the ardor of a philosophical investigator, he proceeded alone into this gloomy recess, for more than half a mile. The task was

of toil and peril. He found it so throughout most of its extent, as not to traverse, except on his hands and feet. His triumph, however, was complete. He found in this abode of darkness, holes worn into the vaulted roof, through which grass and sticks had been borne the waters, furnishing a convincing proof of a communication with the region above.

He shall I forget the air with which he communicated the discovery. His achievement was pronounced equal any in the history of science, and as regarded in our circle as the greatest of the age. The sparry incrustations which he brought from the place, were his subterranean journey, were looked upon with reverence. He listened with eager attention to recital, and our blood curdled at the light that accident might have rendered hopeless a return from this dark void vault. Never did any adventure make so deep an impression on my mind. I retired to rest, but the cave was present in my dreams.—I frequently started from my imperfect sleep at sound of my voice, as it pealed in its endless windings. In the morbid theme of my thoughts was the cave. I felt an irresistible impulse to go to the cave, and become an eye witness of its most hidden recess. I secretly procured a candle, and without giving family the slightest intimation of purpose, bent my steps to the cavern half mile below it, on the edge of a cliff, stood a shot lower. From its hue, I procured fire to light my candle. A moment I stood irresolute, and I around me with strong emotion, a scene was one of loveliness. There was sailing high in air over "the big river," and long trains of migratory birds extended their wedge like ranks (scarcely scarce discernable through haze of an Indian Summer. I went and rudely inscribed on the rock initials of my name, and the date 1800 month it.

I will not you with a recital of my progress, length, the utmost extent was travel, and I stood erect in a chamber, that of which rose little above my head. The candle had diminished to near its length, and admonished me that delay must be short. I placed it secure in the remotest angle of this recess gazed around with a gratification, repaid my toil. I passed my hand over the rock, rendered smooth by the natural abrasion of the waters. I listened with awe to the deep reverberation of footsteps, in this hall of primævalness. At the entrance into this chamber, hung unnumbered sparry slates, that reflected the candle's blaze, the colors of the rainbow. I found a fragment of rock, and attempted to take one to carry with me on my way. The indurated spar refused to yield, and I redoubled my blow, when a mass tumbled down, with a crash seemed to loosen the very foundations of the earth.—The candle remained unextinguished, and I beheld with awe, that the avenue, through which I entered was closed up, and I, a prisoner in the bowels of the earth. Like a bird newly encaged, I to the rock that barred my egress, to the walls that enclosed me; but only added to the deepness of my air. The happiness I had lost for, and the slow, lingering death by fire, which I was to endure, unknown, unlighted, rushed my mind. Frantic despair, I dashed my head against rock, and fell, stunned with a blow, the floor of the cabin. Stupor, and of insensibility succeeded, but the mind was still active. At the far extremity of the cavern, which seemed lengthened out to an almost unmeasurable extent, arose a thin, hard form, that approached and stood before me. She pointed with her skinner to the walls of my dungeon, uttered a peal of laughter. She pointed again, and I beheld my own peaceful home. I saw the wife of my bosom, anxiously from the window for return, to partake with her on the anniversary of our wedding, of a repast she had provided with unusual care. I saw her watching, day after day, my comings, and sink at last with a broken heart.—My property was plundered by my infant girl, who had so oftentimes my knee, and looked into mine with a smile, cast upon the colorless of a merciless world. This saw me to consciousness. The cave was still burning, and for a moment believed myself to be under the force of a horrid dream; but too soon discovered its reality.

The violence of my dream had exhausted itself in ravings, I sat up, with my face leaned upon hand, in all the calmness of passivity. My eyes were riveted upon the candle, and I felt my fingers involuntarily clench into my cheeks. I have heard the condemned felon bewail the swiftness of time; to me, his pinions were motionless. Ages seemed to roll by, while I sat watching the expiring candle. At length its flames ceased, and I gazed upon the wick till the last spark was extinguished.

For a moment I felt a cold shuddering horror, more intense than I had before suffered; but soon my thoughts took a new and calmer direction. The bright sun that looked with gladness on the world above, was to me a thing that never had been. In the scenes of life, I had no longer a share. I was already consigned to the grave, and in a few years all remembrance that I had existed, would perish forever—but there is another world, and I was standing on its verge. To that world I attempted to bend my thoughts: in defiance of my efforts, they would revert to that home which I could never revisit. With the idea of my wife, was a reflection that sent agony to my soul. I had found her an orphan. In the memorable "Annee de coup," or Year of the blow, she had seen her family the victims of the tomahawk. She was then a mere child, but memory had treasured up the endearments of her mother, and the warm affection of a father. She had seen her stripling brother in the little band, by the side of his father, manfully struggling against the savage foe. She saw that band fall before superior numbers; she heard the savage yell of victory, and the frantic shriek of "all is lost." In that moment of despair, the arms of her dying mother were flung around her.—She heard her pale lips implore the God of the fatherless to shield her child.

At that juncture, the gallant Clark threw his forces into the town and saved its citizens from extermination. Among her surviving countrymen she found sympathy; but in the loss of all her kindred, her young heart felt a desolation which no kindness could remove. Not one remained among the millions of the human race, with whom she could claim affinity. The region where she hoped to join her kindred, became the only place associated with the idea of home.

She had just reached her eighteenth year when I made the offer of my hand. A tear started into her eyes. I was rich and allied to the highest families of the province, and she was deeply affected with this proof of disinterested attachment. She had now an object on which to repose her affections, and the love she bore me, though never uttered, breathed through all her actions. She had not a dream of happiness beyond the boundaries of our home. She was the wife who was again to encounter the storms of life, to wear away existence in the shades of sorrow, after having been lifted into the sunshine of happiness. Would no suspicion ever cross her mind that I had wilfully deserted her, and flung away the tender and all confiding heart that beat only for me? Who would tell her that I had died within the walls of a remorseless dungeon? could tell her the agony I had suffered for her?

I had no means of judging of the lapse of time. How long I had been imprisoned, whether days and nights had passed since I entered the cavern, I knew not; but I knew that famine would exhaust the powers of life, and I examined my sensations as the only criterion by which I could judge of the hours that remained of my existence. I found myself faint and weak, and believed it to be the third day of my imprisonment.—My wife had already tasted the cup which she was doomed to drain to the dregs. Instead of preparing for my end, which was now so near, arraigned the justice of Omnipotence, and "gnashed my teeth and bowed." I threw myself in despair upon the cold damp floor, to await the final hour. It seemed as if fate had poured its last vial over me, and felt a horrid triumph in the thought that I could bid it defiance. The state of being which I now endured mocks description. I lost all recollection of the place where I was; but the consciousness that I was suffering the greatest ill that could befall man, never left me. The first sensation that I recollect was that of coldness, and a feeling as if a torrent was rushing over me. I started up, and beheld light beaming into the cavern.—Frantic with hope, I rushed to the opening, and succeeding in raising myself into the broad light of day, and found that I was at the bottom of a sink hole. The rock which had fallen and closed up the cavern, left only loose earth above it, which the rain carried down and afforded me the means of escape. Judge of my rapture on visiting my home after all I had suffered.

Miss. Republican.

PAUL PETERS.

Many years have passed away since Paul Peters dwelt in one of the numerous little hamlets which sprinkle the proud State of New-York. He had come among the simple dwellers of the land, a stranger; and had gradually glided into their confidence. Apparently poor and friendless, none knew him; and after a few short weeks, none asked who he was; yet in that brief space of time he had made himself beloved; his kindness to the little urchins of the place, and his good natured countenance, were welcome passports to all. He was not rich, though he did not appear to be poor. The simplest garb was his constant apparel. The farmer with whom he had domesticated himself, affirmed that he had ever paid his little demands cheerfully.

Two summers passed away, and still Paul was a universal favorite. Not a dance took place, but Paul tripped it away the liveliest of the happy throng; not a harvest feast was given, at which Paul was not the merriest guest; not a fire side party took place without his telling the best story. When he came among the old, they looked upon him as the herald of joy, and he was every where welcomed with a hearty smile. The young considered him as a kind friend, who had caused them many a happy hour, by the pleasant tales of lands far away. The little ones delighted to cling about him; and often as they hung around his neck, would ask him of his home, his family, and friends; he never answered them, save with a kiss. Many a rosy cheeked damsel, as she laughed with him in a dance, would sigh when she gazed upon Paul's broad, manly face, and thought he perhaps loved some fair one who resided in the place where he had spent his younger days.

The family in which he lived began to look upon him with the feelings of kindred; the good old farmer, so dear had he become to him, called him his own dear boy, and the dame would hope he might one day become so, when she beheld him kissing the blushing cheek of her half laughing, half resisting daughter Lucy. Summer flowers die; but love's blossoms ripen.

Paul was soon to become the husband of Lucy. From constantly associating together, they had learned to love each other; and Lucy was one of the simplest and loveliest of the children of nature. The family were assembled the day before the intended nuptials around the blazing hearth. All appeared cheerful, when the dash of a horse's hoofs was heard over the frozen ground, and in a few minutes a grey headed negro, having alighted from a noble horse, presented a packet to Paul. The limbs of the horse were sleek and well formed; and the neatness of the black's dress proved him to be the favored servant of some good lord. Paul having perused the packet, directed the rider to tether the horse, and rest himself until the morrow. No more was said of the occurrence, for it had made an alteration in the manners of the one it most concerned. The jest and the laugh went round; and gay Lucy retired to rest, to dream of the kind hearted Paul, and of future days of love.

The morrow came. But neither Paul nor black were to be found. The horse too was gone. Lucy wept, and her parents advised; but what is advice to a love sick heart! Though she wept, she complained not; though her mother would strive to console, yet what appeared in the shape of comfort acted only as a probe. She was still the same gentle being she had ever been, but she never smiled, the joy of her countenance was gone.

Paul's name was now never mentioned; for it seemed to increase the sadness of Lucy; and his memory, save with the disappointed girl, had begun to die away. Month after month rolled on, but the truant came not.

The war of the colonies was beginning to throw its terrors into this part of the country, till now the abode of peace; and the young were girding on their armor against their oppressors. It was when a troop was organized in this hamlet, that General G. rode with his servant into the village to inspect this body of men. His war-worn features, and scarred brow, told tales of hardship and suffering; but still there were features which were immediately recognized as those of Paul Peters. All were ready to open their arms to him; but little had they thought that the distinguished General, whose voice was so influential in the war councils of his country, was the merry, good humored Paul Peters.

General G. followed by the same grey haired servant, paced quietly along the avenue, leading to the cottage of Lucy. When he arrived at the lattice window,

